AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

New claims 2-45 are presented for reconsideration. Claim 1 is cancelled.

1. (cancelled)

2. (New) In a network comprising a plurality of remote service providers and a plurality of client systems that access the plurality of remote service providers through the network, a method of improving access to any of one or more services provided by the plurality of remote service providers, the method comprising steps for:

at a log-in service, determining the validity of a log-in request received from a client system;

at the log-in service determining the validity of the log-in request, generating a list of one or more services that can be accessed by the client system, wherein the list of one or more services comprises one or more available service providers for the list of one or more services so that if an available service provider for a requested service becomes unavailable, the client system can look to any other available service provider that is listed for the requested service; and

downloading to the client system the list of one or more services and the one or more available service providers for the list of one or more services so that the client system can use the downloaded list of one or more services in accessing the requested service.

3. (New) A method as recited in claim 2, wherein the list of one or more services includes at least one of (i) a service name, (ii) a port identifier, and (iii) a protocol, for each service in the list of one or more services.

4. (New) A method as recited in claim 2, wherein the list is based at least in part on loading conditions at the one or more available service providers.

5. (New) A method as recited in claim 2, further comprising a step for updating the downloaded list of one or more services.

6. (New) A method as recited in claim 5, wherein updating the downloaded list of one or more services is based at least in part on at least one of (i) a service or service provider becoming unavailable, and (ii) a new service or service provider coming one line.

7. (New) A method as recited in claim 5, wherein updating the downloaded list of one or more services is based at least in part on loading conditions.

8. (New) A method as recited in claim 2, further comprising a step for one service introducing another service to the client system, wherein the one service and the introduced service are in the same chain of trust.

9. (New) A method as recited in claim 2, wherein the list of one or more services comprises at least two service entries, each having a unique name, and wherein the at least two service entries refer to the same service.

10. (New) A method as recited in claim 2, wherein the list of one or more services comprises an email service.

11. (New) For a server system comprising a plurality of remote service providers accessible to a plurality of client systems through a network, a computer program product comprising one or more computer readable media carrying computer executable instructions that implement a method of improving access to any of one or more services provided by the plurality of remote service providers, the method comprising steps for:

at a log-in service, determining the validity of a log-in request received from a client system;

at the log-in service determining the validity of the log-in request, generating a list of one or more services that can be accessed by the client system, wherein the list of one or more services comprises one or more available service providers for the list of one or more services so that if an available service provider for a requested service becomes unavailable, the client system can look to any other available service provider that is listed for the requested service; and

downloading to the client system the list of one or more services and the one or more available service providers for the list of one or more services so that the client system can use the downloaded list of one or more services in accessing the requested service.

12. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 11, wherein the list of one or more services includes at least one of (i) a service name, (ii) a port identifier, and (iii) a protocol, for each service in the list of one or more services.

13. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 11, wherein the list is based at least in part on loading conditions at the one or more available service providers.

14. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 11, the method further comprising a step for updating the downloaded list of one or more services.

15. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 14, wherein updating the downloaded list of one or more services is based at least in part on at least one of (i) a service or service provider becoming unavailable, and (ii) a new service or service provider coming one line.

16. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 14, wherein updating the downloaded list of one or more services is based at least in part on loading conditions.

17. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 11, the method further comprising a step for one service introducing another service to the client system, wherein the one service and the introduced service are in the same chain of trust.

18. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 11, wherein the list of one or more services comprises at least two service entries, each having a unique name, and wherein the at least two service entries refer to the same service.

19. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 11, wherein the list of one or more services comprises an email service.

20. (New) In a networked computer system comprising a plurality of remote service providers and a plurality of client systems that access the plurality of remote service providers through the network, a method of improving access to any of one or more services provided by the plurality of remote service providers, the method comprising acts of:

at a log-in service, receiving a log-in request from a client system;

at the log-in service, creating a list of one or more services that can be accessed by the client system, and for each service in the list of one or more services, identifying one or more available service providers so that if an available service provider for a requested service becomes unavailable, the client system can look to any other available service provider that is listed for the requested service; and

sending to the client system, the list of one or more services and the one or more available service providers for each of one or more services in the list so that the client system can use the list of one or more services in accessing the requested service.

21. (New) A method as recited in claim 20, wherein the list of one or more services comprises at least one of (i) a service name, (ii) a port identifier, and (iii) a protocol, for each service in the list of one or more services.

22. (New) A method as recited in claim 20, wherein the list is based at least in part on loading conditions at the one or more available service providers.

23. (New) A method as recited in claim 20, further comprising an act of sending an updated list of one or more services to the client system.

24. (New) A method as recited in claim 23, wherein sending the updated list of one or more services is at least in part due to at least one of (i) a service or service provider becoming unavailable, and (ii) a new service or service provider coming one line.

25. (New) A method as recited in claim 23, wherein sending the updated list of one or more services is due at least in part to loading conditions.

26. (New) A method as recited in claim 20, further comprising an act of one service sending an updated list of services to the client system, whereby the one service introduces another service to the client system, the one service and the introduced service being within the same chain of trust.

27. (New) A method as recited in claim 20, wherein the list of one or more services comprises at least two service entries, each having a unique name, and wherein the at least two service entries refer to the same service.

28. (New) A method as recited in claim 20, wherein the list of one or more services comprises an email service.

29. (New) For a server system comprising a plurality of remote service providers accessible to a plurality of client systems through a network a computer program product comprising one or more computer readable media carrying computer executable instructions that implement a method of improving access to any of one or more services provided by the plurality of remote service providers, the method comprising acts of:

at a log-in service, receiving a log-in request from a client system;

at the log-in service, creating a list of one or more services that can be accessed by the client system, and for each service in the list of one or more services, identifying one or more available service providers so that if an available service provider for a requested service becomes unavailable, the client system can look to any other available service provider that is listed for the requested service; and

sending to the client system, the list of one or more services and the one or more available service providers for each of one or more services in the list so that the client system can use the list of one or more services in accessing the requested service, and thereby balancing workload.

30. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 29, wherein the list of one or more services comprises at least one of (i) a service name, (ii) a port identifier, and (iii) a protocol, for each service in the list of one or more services.

31. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 29, wherein the list is based at least in part on loading conditions at the one or more available service providers.

32. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 29, the method further comprising an act of sending an updated list of one or more services to the client system.

33. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 32, wherein sending the updated list of one or more services is at least in part due to at least one of (i) a service or service provider becoming unavailable, and (ii) a new service or service provider coming one line.

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34. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 32, wherein sending the updated list of one or more services is due at least in part to loading conditions.

35. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 29, the method further comprising an act of one service sending an updated list of services to the client system, whereby the one service introduces another service to the client system, the one service and the introduced service being within the same chain of trust.

36. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 29, wherein the list of one or more services comprises at least two service entries, each having a unique name, and wherein the at least two service entries refer to the same service.

37. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 29, wherein the list of one or more services comprises an email service.

38. (New) For a networked computer system comprising a plurality of service providers that may be accessed by a plurality of client systems through a network, a computer program product comprising one or more computer readable media carrying computer executable instructions that implement a method of balancing workload among the plurality of service providers, the method comprising acts of:

for a particular client system, identifying one or more services that can be accessed by the particular client system;

for each of the one or more services that can be accessed by the particular client system, identifying one or more available service providers based at least in part on loading conditions at the one or more available service providers;

creating a list comprising the one or more services and the one or more available service providers for each of the one or more services; and

sending to the particular client system, the list comprising the one or more services and the one or more available service providers for each of one or more services so that the client system can use the list in accessing the one or more services.

39. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 38, wherein the list of one or more services comprises at least one of (i) a service name, (ii) a port identifier, and (iii) a protocol, for each service in the list of one or more services.

40. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 38, the method further comprising an act of sending an updated list of one or more services to the particular client system.

41. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 40, wherein sending the updated list of one or more services is at least in part due to at least one of (i) a service or service provider becoming unavailable, and (ii) a new service or service provider coming one line.

42. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 40, wherein sending the updated list of one or more services is due at least in part to dynamic loading conditions.

43. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 38, the method further comprising an act of one service sending an updated list of services to the client system, whereby the one service introduces another service to the client system, the one service and the introduced service being within the same chain of trust.

44. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 38, wherein the list of one or more services comprises at least two service entries, each having a unique name, and wherein the at least two service entries refer to the same service.

45. (New) A computer program product as recited in claim 38, wherein the list of one or more services comprises an email service.